Plasmatech Shell Control Pack 1.5b

Reviewed by Chris Frizelle

t's Monday morning, the sun is shining and Joe developer is happily cracking on with his project.

'Righty-ho: what's next? Oh, yes, display a nice list of files for the user to choose from, get them to select a few, then ask for a folder to put them into. Easy-peasy. Makes sense for the selection window to look something like Explorer, I guess. Quick track through the Palette pages... Oh. Pardon? Win 3.1 page?! DirectoryListBox, FileList-Box, DriveComboBox? You can't be serious, they're out of the ark! Hmmm, well, what about that directory selection dialog, then. Let's see, fire up the Help, Select-Directory, that looks more like it ... Eh? You're kidding, this is Win 3.1 too! I'm using Delphi 5 here, surely there's something better?'

You've been there, I'm sure, and it is truly amazing that in Delphi 5 we have n-tier applications, ISAPI, IBX and yet more stunning technology built right into the product, but when working with simple stuff like files and folders, all we get given is creaky old Win 3.1 code.

But fear not, gentle reader, all is not lost. Out of the deserts of Australia comes the cavalry to the rescue: it's Plasmatech and their wonderful Shell Control Pack (hereafter SCP). For a mere \$149 (that's US, and it's only \$79 if you don't want the source), this will allow you to banish those dreadful Win 3.1 controls for ever.

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Welcome Overview Explorer Custom Draw Tree Splitter Pa		Folder Browse Combo Ext	· · · ·
You can easily create split views of any complexity by nesting one splitter panel within another. Below you see a vertical parent splitter containg two horizontal child splitters.			
This is an example of nested splitter panels implementing a 4-pane view.		i 名 名 🖥	
Plasmataeli.	Drag the splitte	er bars!	
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SCP gives you an easy-to-use wrapper around the Windows shell. otherwise known as Explorer. In fact, if you want to create your own copycat version of Explorer, then it's a cinch with SCP. TPTShellTree gives you a treelist view of drives, folders and files (as well as stuff like the Network Neighbourhood, Control Panel, etc). TPTShellList shows the same information in a listview. TPTShell-Combo displays drives, folders and so on in a combobox, then there are enhanced open and save dialogs, plus a custom frame, group box, splitter, an image combobox (to display images next to the text items), combobox, treeview and listview.

There's another really handy dialog, too: TPTFolderBrowseDlg. This solves the ugly problem of how to ask the user for a folder to store files in and also give him or her the option to create a new folder (or delete one). As we've seen, SelectDirectory is a bit of a joke but, in Win 95, NT4 and above, Microsoft thoughtfully provided the SHBrowseForFolder function. This displays a treeview of drives and folders, but there is unfortunately no facility to add or delete folders. SCP's TPTFolderBrowseDlg remedies this, and adds more flexibility too.

SCP supports Delphi 2 to 5 and C++Builder 1 to 5. A variety of example projects are File Browser

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Get me a folder and make it a new one! TPTFolderBrowseDlg to the rescue.

available for download from Plasmatech's website, as well as evaluation versions (including a pre-compiled demo). If your colleagues who use Microsoft development tools get jealous, there's an ActiveX version available. Support is by email and fax, as well as various email lists.

Dear, nice Mr Borland, how about giving those nice folk at Plasmatech rather a lot of money and putting the Shell Control Pack technology into Delphi 6? Pretty please?

Meanwhile, if you need to display and process lists of files, folders, drives or whatnot, do yourself a favour and buy this product: it is excellent. You can visit www.plasmatech.com to purchase it securely online: when bought direct, the source code edition is \$149, DCU-only edition is \$79. Your local dealer will be happy to sell it to you too (typical UK dealer price is £113 plus VAT including source).

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- just some of the extras included. Right: Recognise
- this? It's from our Collection 2000 CD-ROM browser, using **TPTShellTree** and TPTShellList.